

Congress of the United States

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CONTACT: Kate Cyrul (DeLauro) 202-225-3661
Tara McGuinness (Markey) 202-225-2836

DeLauro, Markey Call for Increased Protection for Alaska Wilderness Lawmakers Face off with Industry Lobby, Reintroduce Alaska Rainforest Conservation Act

WASHINGTON, DC- With decisions on Alaska and the Congressional budget just days away, U.S. Representatives Rosa L. DeLauro (CT-3) and Ed Markey (MA-7) today led a rally calling for increased protection of Alaska's wild places such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the United States' only coastal temperate rainforests. DeLauro will today reintroduce the Alaska Rainforest Conservation Act, which will protect wild places in the Tongass and Chugach National Forests. The measure is supported by over one hundred Alaska activist organizations, some of which joined DeLauro and Markey at the rally. Markey already has introduced the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act to permanently protect the Arctic Refuge.

"Protecting national treasures owned by the public is an obligation of those elected to represent the public," said DeLauro. "Yet, year after year, attempts are made to increase logging, road building and oil and gas development of these one-of-a-kind lands. This legislation calls for necessary safeguards to protect our nation's largest and most pristine lands, which will maintain these resources for generations to come."

"These are profound moral issues that go to the core of our concern for future generations," said Rep. Markey. "There should be room on this earth for the protection of special places that are still pretty much the way the Almighty made them. This is not a discussion about a tract of land or a stand of trees. We are fighting for the right of children of future generations to see wilderness in all its awe-inspiring grandeur – this right must not be sacrificed for the temporary and fleeting profits of a few powerful special interests."

The Alaska Rainforest Conservation Act will:

- Designate Wilderness areas, Wilderness Study Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Protect other wild lands by expanding "Land Use Designation II" areas ("LUD II" areas), which are closed to commercial logging.
- Protect watersheds and critical wildlife habitat of Prince William Sound, The Copper River Delta and the Kenai Peninsula.
- Expand Admiralty Island National Monument to include Mansfield Peninsula.
- Establish Restoration Areas where lands previously damaged would be rehabilitated and protected.
- Provide room for a sustainable timber industry in Alaska by allowing logging to continue in areas already containing logging roads and infrastructure.

Decisions on whether to include projected revenues from Arctic Refuge drilling in the House and Senate budget measures will be made by Congress this week. The Tongass is the nation's largest national forest, while the Chugach National Forest, encompassing 5.5 million acres, is the second largest.

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